

Aims and Tasks for English 101, Writing Workshop  
Department of English, Linguistics, and Speech  
University of Mary Washington

*Overall Aim*

To promote orientations to and practices in reading and writing that will improve student writers' ability to think and write critically, both in the preparation of college assignments and in the years after college.

*Tasks*

To accomplish this aim, the following tasks will be required of students in all 101 sections:

- A. Writing of at least three graded papers, totaling no fewer than twelve pages, with at least one paper a minimum of four pages. Each paper should critically engage a substantial topic by exploring complexities of the topic and by pointing to the implications of particular (the student writer's and/or others') orientations to and engagements with that topic.
- B. Completion of two or more assignments that demonstrate the student's ability to research a topic, specifically using this research to generate ideas, to explore complexities in regards to a topic, and to decide on a focus – a particular orientation to the topic – for the paper. Student writers should demonstrate skill in research by choosing their sources carefully, by representing them honestly and precisely in their work, and by properly citing sources.
- C. Successful completion of the TALON library tutorial, prepared by the library staff, before student writers begin their first research project.
- D. Demonstration of competence in the fundamental practices of writing: generating ideas, discovering complexities, exploring possibilities, articulating positions, critically reading one's own and others' work, and effectively revising one's own work.
- E. Demonstration of reading comprehension of and critical engagement with challenging texts.
- F. Exposure to and practice of the MLA style of documentation by parenthetical citation.

*Sub-Aims and Related Tasks*

- A. To convince the student writer that writing is a conscious and careful act, generally requiring considerable preparation and revision to accomplish its purposes.

Tasks. Student writers will be introduced to methods for generating ideas, that is, methods of moving from a blank page to a first draft. In addition, all student writers will present at least one of their graded papers in draft.

- B. To convince the student writer that no single style constitutes “good writing”; good writing is thoughtful, precise, and engaging writing that effectively achieves its purpose.

Tasks. Student writers will be guided in analyzing rhetorical situations, including analysis of audience, purpose, and context. One way to accomplish this task is to study the intended audience(s) of a text, the purpose(s) of the text, and the context(s) in which a text is written – i.e. to contextualize the reading of a text by addressing its historical, social, and/or political contexts.

- C. To insist that the student writer practice writing prose that is precise and effective.

Tasks. Every student writer’s work will be judged in at least three papers on rigor and focus of analysis, clarity of organization, and conformity to standard rules of usage. In addition, every student will be expected to proofread prose.

Conformity to standard usage is presented not as an end in itself, but as necessary to achieve most purposes in writing. Guidelines for “standard rules of usage” will come from a required handbook, to be selected by the instructor.

- D. To insist upon honesty in writing, both in presentation of other people’s work and in the style itself.

Tasks. Students must demonstrate in two of more assignments (at least one graded) the ability to incorporate material written by others, giving full acknowledgment using MLA style, and the ability to use material without presenting it in undigested, unexamined blocks. [In order to demonstrate clear understanding of the principles of handling sources, including the proper use of paraphrase and summary, students must complete a department exercise on plagiarism.]

[In Writing Workshop,] the “research paper” is used to practice honest handling of other people’s materials. It need not show a total command of the topic and, therefore, can be short.